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## INDEPENDENCE DAY 2020 SAFETY TIPS

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Things are going to look quite different as we celebrate America's 244<sup>th</sup> birthday on Saturday, July 4. COVID-19 has required us to limit the size of our social gatherings, postpone vacations and make alternate plans as popular events such as fireworks displays have been cancelled.



Even though it is a national holiday, we cannot take a break from protecting ourselves from the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Your West Central Florida Department of Health offices in Citrus, Hardee, Hernando, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota advise you to:

- Enjoy a backyard barbecue but keep the affair small and with people you are already sheltering with. If you do decide to invite others, keep the group small, wear facemasks when not eating and maintain six feet of social distancing.
- Pass on the picnic if you are feeling ill.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol.

While we are taking these extra steps to keep ourselves safe during the pandemic, the basics for summer safety are still in play:

- Wear a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 to protect yourself from the Sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. Be sure to reapply often and seek shade between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. when the Sun is the strongest.
- Drink plenty of water during the heat of the day. Dehydration can be a major threat during Florida's sweltering heat.
- Know the signs of heat illness and seek shade and air conditioning during the hottest parts of the day.
- If you are swimming at the beach or in a pool, never leave children unattended. It takes only a moment of inattentiveness for a tragedy to happen. Assign someone to watch young swimmers.
- At your picnic, keep hot foods above 140 degrees after cooking and use ice or refreezable cold packs in insulated coolers to keep cold items at 40 degrees or cooler to prevent foodborne illness.

- The summer is prime time for Florida's mosquitoes. Apply a mosquito repellent to keep them – and the diseases they may carry – away from you.
- If you plan to use fireworks to celebrate the holiday, ensure that spectators are far away from where they are being fired, use eye protection and keep a fire extinguisher or bucket of water handy. Never point fireworks at other people or try to relight ones which don't work properly.
- Remember that pets can be frightened by fireworks, so plan accordingly if you know how your pet will react.

Here's hoping for a safe and happy Independence Day from your West Central Florida Department of Health offices. For more information, visit [www.floridahealth.gov](http://www.floridahealth.gov).